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ABSTRACT

Exposure to racism, prejudice, and stereotypes is common in a student's first experiences in a university setting. Language can be a tool to dispel this lack of knowledge about differences in cultures. Awareness of the negative effects of certain words in the English language is one of the first steps to breaking down barriers of discrimination. English 101 at Bradley University (Illinois) was designed with an emphasis on cultural awareness. The one-semester course, required of all first-year students, also incorporates a philosophy to meet some of Bradley's core commitments to the values of a liberal arts education: that the pursuit of knowledge will be conducted in a spirit of free and open inquiry "where the individual is respected and responsible, where each person is the object and source of humane and civil behavior." Bradley's composition program teaches the student to (1) write accurately, clearly, and effectively; (2) achieve an acceptable level of competency in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics; (3) complete all the stages of the writing process successfully; (4) execute the major forms of expository writing effectively; and (5) demonstrate an acceptable degree of competency in research techniques and documentation. To these objectives another can be added: to promote tolerance for diversity by accepting arguments which may be different for each individual. Bradley's emphasis on culture is also evident in Speech Communication, which stresses an awareness of cultural concepts. (A syllabus for English 101 is included. Contains 16 references.) (CR)

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ED 413 609

CREATING JUSTICE IN THE CLASSROOM BY AVOIDING 'JUST-NESS': DEVELOPING THE ETHICAL STANCE IN COMPOSITION 101

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The more people learn about the values and beliefs of other cultures, the less racism and prejudice in society. Most people make judgments about races or ethnic groups because they do not know anything about that particular group. With the decrease of hatred and prejudice, the amount of violent crimes will also decrease. In the words of Rodney King, a black man beaten by white police officers, "Can't we all just get along?" The book One World, Many Cultures *educates students on a moral level. Students need this type of education to help mold them into good human beings.*

Adam, Freshman, Bradley University, December 1996

Adam presents a convincing case for a pedagogical approach that exposes students to many cultures of the world. As part of his final examination in December 1996 at Bradley University, he argues for the continuation of moral education, as well as skills development, in a cultural approach to Freshman *English Composition*. In two semesters in five sections of 100 students, 94 students agreed with Adam; only 6/100 (6%) thought we should not continue to use the cultural approach. Other reasons given by students were that this approach promoted learning about the world students live in; taught the students to be more open-minded; taught them about other cultures and how concepts of identity and initiation were universal; and taught them to relate to feelings people in other times and place have experienced. Particularly poignant was Robyn's comment about a selection by a Native American, Mary Crow Dog:

One particular line in the selection "A Woman from He-Dog" ("If you plan to be born, make sure you are born white, and male") caught my eye, because there are many people today who still believe that is true, including myself. For me to read this (and hear this) in an essay I was instructed to read in my first year in college, actually gave me the idea perhaps things wouldn't be so bad after all. Hearing in an essay that a woman, who was also forgotten and taken advantage of, like most African American women are, wrote something like that meant a great deal to me. If this culture book had not been in the curriculum at Bradley, I may not have ever known that some other woman, as far back as 1960, had the same feelings as me, and that some people who may some day have the power to change that might be reading this also.

Exposure to racism, prejudice, and stereotypes is common in a student's first experiences in a university setting, as the movie *Higher Learning* so aptly demonstrates. Language can be a tool to dispel this lack of knowledge about differences in cultures: awareness of the negative effects of certain words in our language is one of the first steps to breaking down barriers of discrimination. Student Rachelle says that the articles in the cultural textbook are "simply telling about the traditions and values of a culture without regard to discrimination. Hopefully any discrimination a reader may have toward another way of life may be eliminated by this textbook." Finally, Tony summarizes this argument:

Many people just don't seem to realize that there are so many other different cultures and ways of life that exist in the world. If people can begin to learn about other cultures, I believe that they can learn to get along better. I say this because there is a lot of prejudice in the world today. These prejudices could exist because people in one culture, just may not know very much about another culture, which may form some prejudices. Certain people tend to be afraid of what they don't know a whole lot about and this may cause them to get the wrong impression and think the wrong things about a culture. In the story "Transformation," a young Japanese-American girl is stereotyped as being a model student, just because of her culture and background (Minatoya, One World, Many Cultures, *p. 104). Just because some Japanese-Americans have been noticeably smart in the past does not mean that all Japanese people are naturally smart. If the people who stereotype others so much would just take the time to learn more about the people that they are stereotyping, there would be less prejudice. When students learn about other cultures, it may possibly clear up any prejudices or stereotypes.*

Perhaps Matthew's reasoning was most revealing about himself: he had never been able to understand why people would join the Ku Klux Klan. When he read an article by C. P. Ellis ("Why I Quit the Klan," in *One World, Many Cultures*, p. 318), who talked about the economic reasons for joining the Klan, Matthew understood origins of prejudice. Most impressive was his realization that if someone could change from "putting down other races" to eliminating those negative attitudes, he himself was also capable of change.

When S. I. Hayakawa wrote *Language in Thought and Action* in 1941, he was also battling prejudice and ignorance; he, too, believed that attention to language matters could eliminate the horror of creating a fiction in the mind--with language--which Hitler had been able to do with the concept of the superior race. No such race existed, but Hitler had convinced an entire country, with the power of language, word magic, and intentional meanings of words, that a superior genetic race existed where no physical basis for such an idea existed. If English 101 with a cultural approach can begin to eliminate such shortsightedness, ignorance, and prejudice, as my students say it does, then I believe that we will be on the path to the moral education Adam speaks about in the epigraph to this article.

After discussing the philosophy, objectives, and goals for English 101, I will discuss how it complements other courses at Bradley University, examine a problematic activity which produced the opposite effect than I intended, and conclude with an assessment of the course based on my experience of teaching it with this cultural approach for two semesters. Finally, I will present a detailed syllabus, with page references to specific texts and provide an annotated bibliography of other sources, such as videotapes and additional books.

English 101 at Bradley University is described in the 1997-98 undergraduate catalog as a course in "principles of clear and effective writing; analysis of essays as models for writing." (p.193). Since this course is required of all first-year students sometime during their first year, they will be exposed to critical thinking that demands they challenge assumptions, support assertions, and argue from or for a position. Unlike many institutions with a two-semester first-year composition sequence, Bradley only has one semester for its first-year students; at the upper division level, they take the second required composition course.

In designing this initial course with an emphasis on cultural awareness, I have included the traditional aspects of a first-year composition sequence, but I have also incorporated a philosophy to meet some of Bradley's core commitments and the values of a liberal arts education. Specifically, the mission, vision, and core commitments that are germane are a belief that pursuit of knowledge will be conducted in a spirit of free and open inquiry, "where the individual is respected and responsible, where each person is the object and source of humane and civil behavior" (Bradley *1997-98 Undergraduate Catalog*, p. 5). The academic programs and co-curricular activities occur in a "culturally rich and diverse environment"; the object is to prepare students for lifelong learning and to be "effective citizens" in a "global and multicultural society" (p. 5-6).

An effective citizen in Aristotle's day knew how to argue with ethos and pathos, as well as logos. Not just the word was important--but a just citizen could also arouse empathy as well as embody, demonstrate, and display the qualities of an ethical person; a thorough education incorporated all three domains of learning. Too often in the first-year composition sequence (which I have taught at six institutions over a period of twenty-five years), the focus is on the logic, written expression, and surface features of texts. In recent years, much time has been spent remediating what many students never learned in high school.

The objectives of Bradley's composition program show some of this emphasis: English 101 teaches the student to 1) write accurately, clearly, and effectively; 2) achieve an acceptable level of competency in grammar, punctuation, and mechanics; 3) complete all the stages of the writing process successfully; 4) execute the major forms of expository writing effectively; and 5) demonstrate an acceptable degree of competency in research techniques and documentation (English 101 policies, 1997, Dr. Edith Baker). To these objectives for the course, I add an additional one: to promote tolerance for diversity by accepting arguments from positions different from one's own. That specific objective is contained within a larger focus on language awareness: students will become sensitive to language use and logical fallacies through classroom activities and discussion, reading, and writing.

Other more specific objectives include the following:

- Students will compose their world by observing, thinking, writing, analyzing, and reflecting upon it.
- Students will engage in a variety of reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and listening activities.
- Students will write in a variety of modes, to multiple audiences, on subjects about which reasonable people may disagree.
- Students will complete at least 4000 words of instructor-evaluated prose.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to research information and incorporate multiple sources in their discourse.

- Students will employ standard usage and correct sentence structure; they will also adhere to the conventions of spelling and develop a style of sentence variety, that reflects syntactic maturity.

- Students will maintain a portfolio of all their writing during the semester, from the instructor's initial assessment to midway and final self-evaluations.

- Students will engage in at least one in-class writing, as well as a final exam, constructed from notes and other invention strategies, but written in one sitting.

- Students will demonstrate evidence of control of their thinking, learning, and writing processes by writing a substantive, reflective final narrative of their learning, documenting their claims with evidence from the semester's writing portfolio.

While I would like to state that students will become more tolerant of those from different backgrounds and cultures, I know this is not one of those objectives which can be easily measured, other than in an initial attitude survey and in a final evaluation of attitudes. But I have come to believe, after an unfortunate experience with a class a year ago, that teaching tolerance for diversity is one of the most important things we as professors can do; the civic person who can appreciate those from different backgrounds is the world citizen we need for tomorrow, when one will mix with many individuals from different countries and cultures.

Bradley's emphasis on culture is also evident in, *Speech Communication*, another required first-year course that stresses an awareness of cultural concepts. *English Composition* complements *Speech Communication* in different semesters during the first year as students are exposed to thinking about a range of cultural issues. Nevertheless, I found in February 1996 that students were not as capable of accepting others from different backgrounds as I would have expected. In introducing a unit on a definition paper and an informative explanation of a concept, I decided to brainstorm ideas with the class to explore stereotypes inductively and to reveal to them that no two people have the same understanding of vague, abstract terms. In attempting to avoid racial and sexual stereotypes, I asked the class to create a definition of "red neck," hoping to show that no one really had the same definition as their neighbor and that many stereotypes were tied up in definitions of people from different groups.

However, instead of the exercise revealing that people were operating from misconceptions and vague understandings, students began to reinforce stereotypes and tried to agree on a stereotype, an activity which produced exactly the opposite effect from that I intended. I was so shocked I somewhat lamely said, "We have not done a very good job of defining this." That I was being observed by the Director of Writing during this interlude was not fortuitous; she and I both were glad when the end of the hour came. My final evaluation of this activity is that exploding such stereotypes is essential; I just need to become better at executing strategies and activities which eliminate them.

Some of these concerns are inherent in working with this cultural approach, but I am firmly convinced this is a battle worth fighting, for students seem to be becoming more conservative and closed-minded than those I have had previously. Many students today hold their positions obstinately and are not as willing to debate issues about which reasonable people can disagree. But, as Jadon states,

Reading selections out of the culture book gives the reader knowledge about cultures throughout the world. Culture is formed by people, and people are formed by their culture. Culture gives a group of people a sense of belonging. It fills their soul with pride and gives them individuality from other groups and cultures around the world. For example, in the Quiche Indian tribe of northwest Guatemala, there are many specific rituals involved in the birth of a child into the community. . . . No matter where you live or what culture you are a part of, there will be conflict and disorder.

If we could all just "get along," as Rodney King and Adam remind us in the epigraph, we would realize that, as Gordon Allport found in *The Nature of Prejudice*, the differences *within* groups are *greater than* the differences *between groups*. Language can help us break down these barriers as we realize that words can have no basis in reality. A cultural approach to composition gives us that awareness, and discussion of cultural differences in the classroom, when approached with universals such as initiation (a concept that exists in all cultures, whether formal or not) can increase tolerance and initiate students' awareness of their own cultures. As Melissa said, she enjoyed reading about other cultures and "just might finish the book over the holiday break." What more could a professor want? That the student might continue her learning outside the classroom is finally the ultimate objective.

Courtney thinks by studying about cultures we can eliminate that ignorance which leads to discrimination; Daniel admits being naive about other cultures and recognizes that it is important to know how one becomes a member of a culture. He asks the probing question, "Are we born into a culture or do we acquire one?" As the instructor, I would add that one of the purposes of the cultural approach is to help students identify their own cultures, norms, and values. When they write their initial diagnostic about a value or idea they believe in strongly enough to pass on to the next generation, students are never at a loss for words. To simply identify their own cultural values is also an important objective in this course.

English 101 Syllabus

Books:

Axelrod, R., & Cooper, C. (1993). *Concise Guide to Writing.* New York: St. Martin's Press. (CG)

Lunsford, A., & Connors, J. (1995) *St. Martin's Handbook* (3rd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press. (SM)

Hirschberg, S. (Ed.). (1995). *One World, Many Cultures*. New York: Allyn & Bacon. (Culture)

Week	Topics	Reading/Writing/Assignment Topics
I	Introduction	
II	Writing Process	In-Class Diagnostic (Cultural Value or Belief to pass on to the next generation) Three Journal Entries CG 1-16 SM 1-22 (Writing Process)
	Review Diagnostic Introduce Paper I Steppingstone Writing: Invention	**Topics: Identity, Place, Home** CG 17-35 Culture: 1-9: Mary Crow Dog, "A Woman from He-Dog" (Sioux) Culture: 515-30: Chagnon, "Fieldwork Among the Yanamamo" (Brazil) Culture: 43-53: "Emperors" (China)
III	Writer's Notebook (Journal) Freewriting, Brainstorming Culture - Bring book to class	Three journal entries One Culture Summary this week (Under 200 words: objective)
	Thurs. Rough Draft Edit; Bring CG	Writer's Workshop (Peer Evaluation with Criteria Sheet)
IV	Introduce Paper II (Concept or Definition) CG 54-76 Bring CG to class	**Paper I due (NO late papers accepted)**
	Thesis; Word Choice Invention (SM 32-48) Bring CG to class	**Topic: Initiation**; CG: 76-86; 177-204 Culture 94-100: Gersi, "Iban Initiation" Culture 28-39: Menchu, "Birth Ceremonies" Culture 109-120: Saitoti, "Initiation of a Masai Warrior" No ethnocentric bias: objective summary Three journal entries (one free-writing culture response)

V	Bring Culture book to class: Group Discussions on articles read to date	Bring written summary of culture article Peer Evaluation Bring definition of word "culture" (journal entry)
	Rough Draft Edit (Workshop)-Paper II SM: 55-73	Three journal entries Thurs - Journals due (12 entries) **(NO late journals accepted)** (Four culture responses) Culture 193-205: Marjorie Shostak, "Memories of a Kung Girlhood" (One culture summary this week): Bring Rough Draft: Writer's Workshop
VI	Organization (SM 79-89) CG: 88-119 Intro. to Paper III (Writing Assignment, CG-106) Bring CG	**Topics: Acculturation Ethnocentrism; Stereotypes** Culture: 141-153: French, "Gender Roles" Culture: 205-213: Coward, "The Body Beautiful" Tues. Paper II due (NO late papers accepted) Three journal entries Movie: *The Gods Must Be Crazy*
	Bring SM and Culture to Class Grammar Review: Fragments, Comma Splices	Culture: 628-640: Silko, "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective" Culture: 287-294: Parker, "What is Poverty?" (One culture summary)
VII	Research Paper Topics: Problem-Solution Concise Guide 153-188 Workshop Paper III	Three journal entries (One culture summary this week from any article in book) Exploration of interests, values, abilities: forced freewrite
	In-class Writing (Midterm) **You must be present for writing (NO make-up)**	
VIII	Library Work Meet in atrium of library	Two journal entries CG: 228-254

IX	Paragraphing - bring Concise Guide to Writing CG: 191-203	**Topics: Spirituality, Beliefs, Connotations, Denotations, Advertising** Three journal entries Culture: 569-585: Del Guercio, "Secrets of Haiti's Living Dead" Culture: 347-352: Derricotte, "Black Notebooks" Paper III due **(No late papers accepted)** (One culture response this week) Movie: *Still Killing Us Softly*
	Approaches to Research - Introduce Paper IV - Bring CG and SM to class	Read CG: 153-188 Read SM: 646-664 Journals due - 11 entries, Three from Culture **(NO late journals accepted)**
X	Writing Research Bring CG and SM to class	SM: 607-621 Read SM: pp. 551-580, 586-605
	Bring SM and Culture to class (Grammar Review) Note Taking, Outlining, Summarizing, Analyzing, Sources, Documentation, Formatting, Outlining	**Topics: Institutions, Socialization, Education Othering** Culture: 221-223: Logsdon, "Amish Economics" Culture: 338-347: Kincaid, "A Small Place" Discussion of Culture articles
XI & XII	Individual Conferences No classes these days; Meet in instructor's office at assigned time	
	Logical Fallacies Rough Draft Workshop Bring SM	Bring Rough Draft: Workshop (Required) Documentation Problems
XIII	Assignment for Paper V CG 120-152 Workshop - Final Problems	**Topics: Argumentation, Position Paper**: Construct a paper on whether Culture should be retained for future classes, using specific articles for support

	Paper IV due (Documented Essay)	Paper IV due - 2000 to 2500 words **(NO late papers accepted)** Be prepared to give oral presentations of three minutes on major points of paper
XIV	Bring CG and SM to class	Read Chapter 5 - CG (Position paper)
	Grammar Review	Paper V due Rough Draft; Peer Workshop
XV	Review for final exam Summary Course Evaluations	**Final Copy - Paper V Due**

References

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
This book about causes and symptoms of prejudice is a classic in the field.

Axelrod, R., & Cooper, C. (1993). *Concise guide to writing* (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
Rhetoric for composition and handbook for writing essays, with models of assignments and information about constructing documented essays.

Beaty, J., & Hunter, J. P. (Eds.). (1994). *New worlds of literature: Writings from America's many cultures* (2nd ed.). New York: Norton.
Selections are usually two to ten pages long, with critical questions at end for reading and writing. Explanation of the stages of the writing process at the back of the book.

Colombo, G., Cullen, R., & Lisle, B. (Eds.). (1995). *Rereading America: Cultural contexts for critical thinking and writing*. Boston: Bedford Books.
The focus of the book is on myths that dominate U.S. culture, such as the myths of individual opportunity, progress, freedom, and the model family.

"Culture." (1981). *Webster's third new international unabridged dictionary of the English language*. Springfield, MA: Merriam.
Provides comprehensive definitions of the word "culture."

Hayakawa, S. I. (1964). *Language in thought and action* (2nd ed.). New York: Harcourt.
Focus of book is on four uses of language and semantics: language to persuade and control behavior, language to transmit information, language to express and create social cohesion, and the language of poetry and emotions. Semantics is discussed as the "study of human interaction through communication" (Preface, ix).

Hirschberg, S. (Ed.). (1995). *One world, many cultures* (2nd ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Textbook for this course. Has articles from five to twenty pages in length, with articles from many cultures around the world. Each selection has questions on "evaluating the text," "exploring different perspectives," and "extending viewpoints through writing." In August 1997 a new edition of this book became available.

Lunsford, A. & Connors, J. (1995). *The St. Martin's Handbook* (3rd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Full handbook and documentation apparatus, with instructor's edition by Cheryl Glenn available.

Moyers, B. *The public mind: Consuming images.* PBS Video. (Tel: 800-424-7953).

Excellent videotape which presents the extent to which we are controlled by media images, in politics as well as advertising. Election speeches are from the 1980s.

Singleton, J., Director. (1994). *Higher Learning.* Columbia Tristar. 127 minutes.

This film is a hard-hitting look at what students (initiates) in the university system undergo, from rape to exposure to propaganda by hate groups to racism and sexism. This is an outstanding film, but needs careful introduction and monitored discussion.

Stanford, J. A. (1997). *Connections: A multicultural reader for writers* (2nd ed.). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.

All selections are brief, two to four pages, with critical apparatus at end of each article designed to engage both readers and writers. Thorough MLA and APA documentation styles.

Kilbourne, J. (1997). *Still killing us softly.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Documentary Films (P.O. Box 385, Cambridge, MA 02139, Tel: 617-354-3677.). Approximately one hour.

Thorough treatment of advertising techniques in a lecture at Harvard, with illustrated slides and exact references to advertisements, primarily print. Edited version of lecture in front of a student audience.

Takaki, R. (1993). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America.* Boston: Little, Brown.

This reference book for the instructor examines U.S. American history from the perspective of minority peoples themselves. Author asks questions about what the ultimate meanings of "being American" imply.

Uys, J. (Producer, Writer, Director). (1986). *The Gods must be crazy.*" Twentieth-Century Fox. (109 minutes).

An excellent movie to show early in the semester to point out cultural differences. The world of the Kalahari changes drastically when a coke bottle is dropped from

an airplane and XI decides to return the mysterious present to the gods at the end of the earth. Raises good discussion topics about "civilization."

Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Narration of definitions of broad concepts, such as culture and ethnography. Good for background reading of the instructor.

Wiener, H. S., & Bazerman, C. (1996). *Side by Side: A multicultural reader and handbook for writers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Brief opening has 15-page section on reading and writing and critical thinking as well as rhetorical strategies. Part I has reading selections which are approximately seven pages long on topics such as language, identity, home, dreams, and prejudice, with questions following each selection. Part II includes a complete handbook of 100 pages for writers but does not include documentation apparatus.